

THE GOLDEN AFFECT

**By
Michael Gerald**

It's that time of year again, when all of the NBA media focuses its attention on LeBron James' team, and any off-season malarkey they can muster. This time it's all about Kyrie Irving wanting to be traded. But this isn't the first time a player wanted to be traded from a team that for all intents and purposes, was considered successful. This is "The Golden State Affect". But it appears to be more of a business proposition than Irving harboring a personal slight towards James, who is set to be a free agent in 2018. But the Cleveland Cavaliers' ownership seems destined to be ordinary.

Either way, Irving still has two years left on his contract. Some reports suggest a straight up trade to New York in exchange for Carmelo Anthony, but Anthony seems to be more intrigued by a trade to Houston to join James Harden and Chris Paul. Which in my humble opinion is a perfect fit. Stay-tuned, they just may add Susan Lucci to the cast for more drama.

The sports news mill is usually slower this time of year when mid season baseball, NFL training camps, and NHL and NBA summer league is all there is to offer on television. But this year's NBA summer league has been different. Thanks to Alonzo and Lavar Ball, the Drew League hasn't been the only high-level basketball to find this summer. That's right, I said it. Lavar Ball... or Mr. Ball, if you're nasty. He is the biggest Master of Ceremonies since Ringling Brothers, and maybe Michael Buffer.

I, like many others, really bought into the obnoxious narrative of Lavar Ball, thanks to public opinion. But after yesterday's summer league game featuring his other son LaMelo Ball, and his team, facing off against top high school recruit Zion Williamson, and his team, I can safely say that Lavar Ball is a Mad Marketing Genius.

The game was played in front of a capacity crowd in the thousands, and streamed live on Facebook to over 800,000 viewers. It was a throw back to a time when top basketball talent toughened their skill sets against the best players at local parks and gyms, as mass crowds would form to create the kind of spectacle that could only be lived if you were there in person to see it live. Except now with cameras everywhere.

He probably won't get much credit for it, but Lavar Ball and his son's has enabled basketball to stay relevant during a time when it normally falls out of the national spotlight. This will serve to make millions of dollars for the NCAA, NBA, and for other basketball pockets around the world. Yet, some would judge Lavar harshly for his methodology.

But quit as kept, pun intended, Lavar Ball has guided his sons into the international spotlight while keeping most of the light off of them so as not to distract from their missions, while allowing enough light to shine on them, so the rest of us can see their talents and allow them to succeed. Brilliant! Just Freakin' Brilliant!